IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (currently amended) A method for the laser machining ~~of~~ coated sheets, in which, on at least one side of at least one sheet, at least one topographical change protruding from the surface is generated by means of a ~~the~~ laser directing a [, the] laser beam ~~being directed~~ onto the surface by means of a scanner device, wherein

~~characterized~~

- ~~in that~~ the laser beam generates the at least one topographical change on that side of the at least one sheet which faces away from said beam, by melting through ~~continuously fusing~~ this sheet in the region of its machining area, and/or
- ~~in that~~ the laser beam describes about the center of its machining area a narrowing spiral.

2. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the laser beam is not focused upon the surface.

3. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 ~~in one of the preceding claims~~, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein at least one further sheet is brought into contact with the at least one coated sheet in such a way that the at least one protruding topographical change causes the formation of at least one gap

between the at least two sheets, and in that the at least two sheets, in the region of the at least one gap, are welded together in such a way that vaporization products formed in the process can escape into the at least one gap.

4. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 3, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the at least two sheets are welded together in such a way that the resultant weld seam at least partially replaces the at least one topographical change previously generated.

5. (new) A method as in claim 1, wherein, in the case that the laser beam describes about the center of its machining area a narrowing spiral, the surface from which said least one topographical change protrudes is the side facing the laser.

6. (new) A method as in claim 1, wherein, in the case that the laser beam describes about the center of its machining area a narrowing spiral, the surface from which said least one topographical change protrudes is the side facing away from the laser.

7. (new) A method for the laser machining coated sheets, in which, on at least one side of at least one sheet, at least one topographical change protruding from the surface is generated by means of a laser directing a laser beam onto the surface by means of a scanner device, wherein

- the laser beam generates the at least one topographical change on that side of the at least one sheet which faces away from said beam, by melting through this sheet in the region of its machining area, and
- wherein said melting through is controlled by pre-specifying the processing time or by providing a penetration sensor which regulates the laser machining time.

8. (new) A method as in claim 7, wherein the surface from which said least one topographical change protrudes is the side facing the laser.

9. (new) A method as in claim 7, wherein the surface from which said least one topographical change protrudes is the side facing away from the laser.